

Education

To enroll a grandchild/relative child in school, call the school district office (listed in your local phone book) in your area to find the school they will attend. Ask the school principal or district office about their enrollment policy as it pertains to your situation. Obtain a written copy of the policy. In some cases, staff may be misinformed about enrollment procedures for children in relative care.

Some helpful tips from the Kansas Department of Education include:

- ▶ attempt to obtain a statement from the parent regarding the living situation
- ▶ obtaining legal guardianship or custody, or
- ▶ sign an "affidavit" certifying that they are caring for the child full time

To enroll your child in school you will need their:

- ▶ Birth Certificate (if starting kindergarten)
- ▶ Immunization Records
- ▶ School Records (if transferring from another school)
- ▶ Proof of Residency

For more information about your local school district and their requirements, please contact the Kansas Department of Education at 785-296-3201 or visit their website at www.ksde.org

A list of all the state laws affecting kinship care families, including educational enrollment laws is available in the "Kinship Care State Fact Sheets" which can be accessed through the Children's Defense Fund at www.childrensdefense.org/ss-kincare.php

Legal

Legal options are available to grandparent/relative caregivers who desire a formal custody arrangement, depending on each family's individual circumstances. Obtaining legal authority can be difficult and emotionally draining for the caregiver. Before making any decisions, seek professional advice from a qualified attorney specializing in family law to review all of the options available to you.

A review of options with a qualified attorney specializing in family law is crucial in determining what type of legal authority is best for you.



An illustration showing a newspaper with the word 'news' on it, a purple mobile phone, and a computer mouse.	<p>For more information on RAPP in Kansas, go to the KDOA website: www.agingkansas.org/kdoa and click on Relatives As Parents Program under the Programs link.</p>
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KDOA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or handicap. If you feel that you have been discriminated against by KDOA or any KDOA funded program, you have the right to file a complaint with KDOA, 1-800-432-3535. (TTY: 1-800-766-3777).



Relatives As Parents Program

A Program for Grandparents and Other Relatives in Kansas Serving as Caregivers for Children

Supported by a Brookdale Foundation Grant administered by the Kansas Department on Aging (KDOA)

GRANDPARENTS and Relative Caregivers Information Guide

Mission Statement

The mission of the Relatives As Parents Program in Kansas is to identify and support issues and needs of kinship caregiving, especially as it relates to grandparents raising grandchildren.

(Updated 8/2005)

Introduction

When a parent is unable to care for their children, the children are often raised by a relative or placed in foster care. According to the 2000 Census Report, grandparents and other relatives are stepping in as caregivers for these children.

The stories of these grandparent/relative caregivers are unique, but the issues and concerns are the same. Finding answers to questions regarding legal, financial, educational and medical questions can be frustrating and overwhelming.

The purpose of this guide is to provide a starting point in obtaining information for the grandparent/relative caregivers in answering their questions of, "What Do I Do?", "Who Do I Call?", "Where Do I Go?".

Financial

When a child comes to live with a grandparent/relative caregiver it is usually without warning. The most difficult and worrisome problem for the grandparents/relative caregiver, many already living on a limited budget, is the added expense.

A grandparent/relative caregiver raising a grandchild/child relative, may be eligible for the following:

- ▶ Cash assistance
- ▶ Medical assistance
- ▶ Food assistance
- ▶ Child care assistance
- ▶ Child Support

Information on available services and the application process may be obtained by contacting a local Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) office or calling **toll-free** at **1-888-369-4777**. An on-line application and guide to services is available on the SRS website at www-srskansas.org. SRS staff will help determine your eligibility for assistance.

Mental Health Services

Children living with a grandparent or other relative may not be able to express how they feel, and this may cause inappropriate behavior and poor grades. Both the child and caregiver may benefit from therapy to help them deal with a variety of issues and feelings such as neglect, physical and sexual abuse, abandonment, grief, embarrassment, depression, and anxiety.

The state of Kansas has a large network of community mental health centers that work with children and their families. Services offered by these centers may include individual and family therapy, case management and education and prevention services, as well as support groups for children and their families.

There are over two dozen community mental health centers throughout the state of Kansas. For a complete listing of these resources, please visit the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas at www.acmhck.org or call 785-234-4773 to get a complete listing.

Family Caregiver Support Program

A 2000 amendment to the Older Americans Act established the National Family Caregiver Support Program known as the Family Caregiver Support Program in Kansas. Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) work with community-based organizations to provide services to grandparent/relative caregivers.

Each AAA may allot up to 10% of their service funding for services for grandparent/relative caregivers who are – 60 years of age or older and providing care to children under age 19; live with the child; act as the primary caregiver of the child; and is raising the child.

For more information, contact your local Area Agency on Aging or the Kansas Department on Aging (KDOA) at 1-800-432-3535.

Medical

Children being raised by grandparents/relative caregivers may have physical problems that require immediate attention or long-term treatment. Without legal custody or guardianship, caregiver rights are limited when it comes to obtaining medical treatment and health insurance coverage. Some medical providers may accept a written statement of "medical consent", signed and notarized by one or both parents. This form authorizes the caregiver to obtain medical treatment for the grandchild. You will need to contact the medical provider to find out if this would be acceptable.

Health Insurance

Grandparents and relative caregivers may apply for free or low-cost health insurance on behalf of the children in their care through Kansas' Medicaid and Health Wave programs. For more information on these programs, **call 1-800-792-4884 (TTY: 1-800-792-4294) or visit www.kansashealthwave.org website.**

Support Groups

When a grandparent/relative caregiver takes on the responsibility of caring for a child, the challenges they face are enormous, and they are not prepared for the financial, legal, education and other issues. In their new role as caregiver, they may experience feelings of frustration, anger and resentment toward the parents.

As a result of the increasing number of grandparents and other relative caregivers, grandparent/kinship support groups are being formed throughout the state. These support groups provide an opportunity for members to share experiences, information and encouragement.

For information on available support groups in Kansas, please contact the Kansas Department on Aging at 785-296-4986 or 1-800-432-3535.